



FREIGHT RAIL & INTERNATIONAL INTERCHANGE

Key Facts

- International interchange has paid huge dividends for local communities and businesses across the nation.
- This approach enhances border security, employee safety, improves reliability, reduces local impacts, supports U.S. rail jobs, and facilitates international commerce.

For more than 25 years, Canadian train crews have delivered U.S.-bound trains to rail yards several miles into the U.S. Those crews then hand over control to a U.S.-based crew and return to Canada. They often operate a Canadian-bound train back over the border.

Similar operations began in 2018 along the southern border. Certified Mexican crews operated trains into rail yards in Laredo, Texas with positive results. This year—railroads started implementing international interchange agreements at the Eagle Pass rail crossing. They worked with their counterparts in Mexico, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

THE SECURE CORRIDOR CROSS-BORDER RAIL OPERATIONS STRATEGY

In 2018, CPKC joined the FRA, CBP and El Servicio de Administración Tributaria to create their Secure Corridor strategy. It aimed at strengthening border security and increasing capacity at the Laredo International Rail Bridge. This strategy aims to allow trains to cross the bridge without stopping. It also unifies cargo processing through collaboration between railroad partners and U.S. and Mexican regulatory agencies. Additionally, it aims to enhance inspections.

As part of this Secure Corridor strategy, CPKC worked with FRA and CBP to obtain the necessary certifications. These certifications allow crews from Mexico to travel roughly 10 miles into the U.S. to the Laredo rail yard. These crews began successfully operating in July 2018, before returning to Mexico on southbound trains.

Permitting trains to move directly to rail yards to change crews has mitigated delays on the bridge. This method decreased train processing times and created a more secure border. According to CBP, the new interchange process has reduced train idle time by about one-third. As a result, fewer blocked crossings in downtown Laredo help reduce congestion and potential security risks. Capacity across the Laredo International Rail Bridge has also increased, creating new U.S. jobs.

THE EAGLE PASS RAIL CROSSING

The Eagle Pass rail crossing is the second busiest rail crossing on the US-Mexico border. An average of 19 trains are processed in both directions daily. These trains carry various products vital to the economic security of both countries.

Trains interchanged at Eagle Pass are currently required to come to a complete stop on the single-track Union Pacific Railroad Bridge to change crews. This process can take 30 minutes. At times, it has made the border a bottleneck. This results in security and public safety risks as rail cars block multiple streets and highway crossings on both sides of the border. They become vulnerable to theft, vandalism, and trespassing.

A streamlined process would align Eagle Pass with other U.S. crossings where this is already common practice. This includes along the northern border with Canada and the southern border in Laredo, Texas.

THE BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL INTERCHANGE

- Enabling trains to operate between secure rail yards on either side of the border without stopping at the border reduces the risk of theft, vandalism, and trespassing. It also enhances safety and minimizes the time trains occupy streets and highways in border communities.
- By moving the crew change from the Union Pacific Railroad Bridge to a rail yard, the capacity of the bridge would increase by 25%. This increased capacity would allow railroads to better serve customers on both sides of the border. Simultaneously, it would improve security.
- The introduction of international crews has not reduced hours, jobs, or compensation for U.S. rail workers. As capacity across the Laredo International Rail Bridge has increased, new jobs have been created in the U.S. to handle the additional trains.
- FRA has said, “Crew changes along the U.S. and Mexican border are a challenge to moving goods in an efficient and safe manner.”
- For decades, crews have been safely and reliably delivering goods across the U.S.-Canadian border into U.S. rail yards. This helps railroads operate more efficiently.